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Captain Warner's Map

An Early Civil War Camp in Iowa

by David Holmgren

In this sesquicentennial year of the start of the Civil War, a new find at the State Historical Society of Iowa has added yet another significant piece of information on the state's involvement in fighting for the Union cause. The discovery is a hand-drawn map of Camp Union near Dubuque—the only map ever found of Camp Union.

The map was drawn by Captain William W. Warner (*above*) of Company C, 12th Iowa Infantry. Measuring about 14x17 inches, it was found amidst a small collection of his letters. Warner had sent the map and letters to his family in Clermont, in northeast Iowa.

Born in Ohio in 1836, William Warner came to Iowa with his family in 1848. When the war broke out in 1861, he was in his senior year at Fayette's Upper Iowa University, which had been founded only four years before. Warner was a student leader at Upper Iowa and recruited Company C, along with fellow student David B. Henderson (who would rise to become Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, 1899–1903, the only Speaker ever from Iowa).

Company C included many students from Upper Iowa and became known as the University Recruits. It was only natural that Warner was unanimously elected captain and Henderson chosen as first lieutenant. Another Upper Iowa student, Henry J. Grannis, was chosen as color bearer—an extremely dangerous role in battle—and had the distinction of being the only color bearer of the company and the regiment for the duration of the war.

Camp Union was established a mile or so north of

Dubuque on the recommendation of Col. Addison H. Sanders, a military aide to Governor Samuel J. Kirkwood. On August 9, Iowa's adjutant general, Nathaniel B. Baker, directed Sanders to begin construction. It was one of a series of camps established in the early stages of the war to organize and muster Iowa volunteer regiments into federal service.

Another University Recruit, David W. Reed, who later in the war became the fourth captain of Company C, vividly described the camp more than 40 years later: "Camp Union was located on a sand bluff about fifty feet above the river. The barracks consisted of wooden sheds, built entirely, including the roof, of rough green pine lumber; they were undoubtedly comfortable summer quarters but were quite too well ventilated for the rigorous winter weather of November, 1861. To each company was assigned a single building twenty by fifty feet, built without floors or doors, and with two platforms, one above the other, each about twelve feet wide, extending the whole length of the building, each platform intended to give sleeping accommodations for fifty men, twenty-five on each side, heads together in the middle. . . . No provisions were made for warming the barracks neither was there kitchen or shelter of any kind in which to cook or eat. No matter how stormy the weather, victuals must be cooked out of doors by an open fire, and eaten from plates held in the hand while seated on the ground or standing in the snow or rain."

Within weeks of construction, Camp Union had received hundreds of recruits to be mustered into fed-

eral service as the 9th Iowa Infantry and the 3rd Iowa Artillery Battery (which was then attached to the 9th Iowa). By late September, the regiment was headed by steamboat to Benton Barracks near St. Louis, and more recruits were pouring into the camp to be mustered as the 12th Iowa Infantry, including Captain Warner's Company C, which arrived on October 17.

Warner drew the map using only a graphite pencil and two colored pencils, one red and one blue. The map clearly shows the barracks arranged in two rows and, perpendicular to those, the officers' quarters below a bluff. At several locations in the woods on both sides of the camp, soldiers are cooking meals. The trees have shed their leaves, which coincides with the period of October 17–November 26, when the 12th Iowa was in camp. The map shows three guards posted near the entrance on the southwest end (*the right side of the map*),

and posts driven into the ground for a chain guard for more security.

The map confirms written descriptions of Camp Union and adds information found nowhere else. For example, one description mentions the presence of other buildings but does not cite specific locations. Warner labeled his company's quarters, the guard house, commissary building, hospital, and quartermaster's department, all relatively close to the camp entrance, and the officers' quarters and camp headquarters in a row building at the north end. Large American flags fly over each of the soldiers' barracks and there is an even larger flag on a pole between stacks of cannon balls in front of the headquarters.

Given the orientation of the map, it is apparent that Warner's vantage point was the bluff on the northwest end of the camp. The body of water at the top of the

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